Town of Rutland

Finance Committee

Minutes: March 5, 2020

Meeting Opened: 7:01 P.M.

Attendance:
Board Members Present: Iain McKinlay, Edward Purcell, Dave Lussier, Karen Nahrwold, Peter O’Malley, Thomas Ruchala
Board Members Absent: Carol Martens
Staff Members Present: Mike Nicholson (Town Administrator), Tomeca Murphy (Secretary)
Guests: Harald Scheid, Heather Cheney, Kerry Remington, Library Trustees, Elliott Nadeau Jr., Mike Sullivan, Doug Briggs, Michael Moriarty

Votes:

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 27, 2020—Motion made by Karen Nahrwold, seconded by Peter O’Malley; vote unanimous at 7:01 P.M.

Motion to close the meeting—Motion made by Karen Nahrwold, seconded by Dave Lussier; vote unanimous at 8:45 P.M.

New Business

FY21 Department Budget Review

Board of Assessors
Harald Scheid (President of RRG) and Heather Cheney (Assessor) presented their budget to the committee. The town has a contract with Regional Resource Group, which is a firm that provides the staffing for the assessor's office. However, moving forward, they will be giving up the administrative position to the town to fill. So, there is an increase of $16,333, which equates to an employee working 4 days a week from 8:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. The contract also includes inspectors, such as for new construction, totaling about 6 staff all together. RRG is able to provide more affordable employees than if the town had to hire staff themselves. The $92,000 requested includes the contract fee, benefits for the employees and software. Karen Nahrwold expressed that the office hours are not always conducive to residents who work full time. Mike Nicholson responded that the goal of increasing the admin hours is to better accommodate this need. Heather also added that most of her interactions are over the phone, but they can make themselves available after hours if necessary.

Library
Kerry Remington, Director of the Library, along with trustees of the Board were present to discuss their budget. Kerry prepared the budget as if the town had already reached 10,000 residents, as it will have a great impact on the library when it does. They are requesting salary increases for the Director, the Assistant and the Children's Librarian. They have also added 7 additional hours open at no expense to the town and have increased the children's librarian hours to 30. As such, there has been an increase in the need for supplies. Other charges include the book budget and library media materials. Peter O'Malley asked if they had performance metrics to see how they compare to libraries in surrounding towns. To this end, they track the number of patrons on a monthly basis, the number of programs offered to children, the number of meetings held in the building and who is accessing the building. Ruthann Rovezzi, trustee, added that they are trying to stay current with e-
content offerings and they boast the largest collection of large print books in the area. Kerry shared that as of last week's payroll, she is officially out of library aid money in the FY2020 budget, so she is now relying on state aid. She attributes the increase in hours on depleting the funds at a more rapid pace. When the town hits 10,000 residents, the library is mandated to be open for 40 hours/week, which would be 3 more hours than they are currently open to the public. As such, Kerry included this in her budget requests.

**Board of Health**

Elliott Nadeau, Jr. presented the budget on behalf of the board. There is a requested increase of 2% for the administrative assistant's salary. Elliott added that Lynn Miller, admin. assistant, is an integral part of the department. Other positions are paid via the fees received for services, so this number can fluctuate. In looking at surrounding towns, Rutland has among some of the lowest fees. So, the department is looking to make a slight increase to those fees in the near future. Mike Nicholson added that he is very impressed with the work of the Health Agent, Rich Stevens. He keeps the town well informed and is very responsive to resident requests. The board requested to see the revolving funds and Mike said he will get that sent out to everyone.

**Rutland Regional Dispatch Center**

Communications Director Michael Moriarty presented the budget on behalf of the Dispatch Center. The center services 5 towns including Rutland, Oakham, Barre, Warren and Hubbardston. Last year, they received approximately 62,000 calls and are at 38,000 calls so far this fiscal year as of February 10, 2020. This year, grant awards will be increasing from $324,892 to $452,117. The budget for supplies and uniforms remained the same at a total of $7,000. There is an increase for dental and health insurance due to rate increases and more employees taking advantage of the plan. There is a 12% increase in salaries at a requested $751,210.56. This number will change once union negotiations are complete, but this represents the worst case scenario. The town is looking to move towards a district model for the dispatch center, which Director Moriarty is currently working on. Mike Nicholson added that Dir. Moriarty is stretched very thin right now with all of his responsibilities, but he is doing a wonderful job managing them all. The budget is also seeing an increase because Barre and Warren Fire Departments were added to the center. The Swift Reach 911 increased due to the addition of Warren, but that is billed out to their town. Overall, the operating budget increased $122,396.89 and the grant numbers reported are from last year because they will be the same or will increase in 2021. Under regional assessments, $818,042.90 will be billed to the five towns, which is based on the population vs. the number of calls. Mike has also been in communication with the MA Director of 911 with regard to the installation of a radio tower in Hubbardston. This tower would also have the capability for cell phone use, so the town could rent it to a wireless carrier and provide another source of revenue.

**Rutland Development & Industrial Commission**

Chairman Mike Sullivan and Doug Briggs presented on behalf of the Commission, which requested a total of $750 for FY2021. This includes purchased services, supplies and secretary wages. They shared that the solar project at Rutland Heights is still moving forward, but it has been a drawn out process with National Grid. They also received an RFP from a party interested in the Rutland Heights property.

**Old Business**

The request for funds transfer received from Treasurer/Collector, Becky Tuttle, will be further discussed at the next meeting on March 12, 2020.

Ted Purcell inquired as to when the Committee would received the follow up numbers from the DPW requested at the February 20th meeting. Iain said that Director Buckley is working on it and should have it to them by the end of the month. If he's able to get it completed sooner, Mike Nicholson will forward it along to the board.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tomeca Murphy, Secretary